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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Hamburger (Netherlands), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: TRAINING AND RESEARCH

(b) UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (A/49/31)

1. Mr. de SOUZA (Rector of the United Nations University), introducing the report of the Council of the United Nations University (A/49/31), said that during the current year, the University had initiated degree-oriented education programmes with other established institutions of higher learning in Tokyo, Bangkok and India. With its current network of research and training centres and programmes in places as far apart as Helsinki, Macau and Accra, the University had reached a relative degree of institutional maturity.

2. It had embarked upon a process of programme consolidation in conjunction with a systematic effort to bring its research and training priorities more into line with the global concerns of the United Nations. Thus, in 1993, the Rector had launched a programme on environmentally sustainable development which gave priority to post-graduate training, policy reflection and policy formulation and management. That programme was expected to be implemented in close cooperation with United Nations bodies especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The University was also planning to establish a long-term research and capacity-building programme in the area of peace and governance aimed at improving understanding and possibly resolving some key issues raised in an agenda for peace.

3. The links between the United Nations University and the United Nations system had been considerably strengthened. Thus, the University had provided inputs for recent conferences such as the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction as well as for conferences yet to be held such as the Fourth World Conference on Women. It was crucial that channels of communication between the Organization and the University be strengthened and institutionalized.

4. In order to ensure a wider recognition of its work, the University itself must promote its activities. It had published about 350 books since 1975, and it had reached agreement with the University of Paris to publish the results of its academic research in the journal Le Trimestre du Monde.

5. As of October 1994 total contributions received by the University since its inception came to approximately $260 million, of which close to $100 million had been contributed since 1987. While the University's resources had increased in absolute terms, the combination of inflation and an unfavourable international monetary climate had eroded their real value. The University had taken all the economy measures possible, and further staff cuts and/or programme

consolidations could not be entertained. Thus sizeable new contributions to the Endowment Fund were now needed.

6. Mr. RUNGE (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union and Austria, said that the work of the United Nations University was of high value to the United Nations and its member States, and the University should increase its cooperation with other organs of the United Nations system. The European Union appreciated the University's emphasis on the themes of peace and governance, the environment, science and technology and human and social development, and it had contributed substantially to the financing of University projects, especially in the field of information technologies.

7. Mr. OWADA (Japan) said that Japan attached great importance to the University's success. While it was important for the University to try to make its activities more visible and accessible to those outside the academic world, in the final analysis, it was through the quality of its activities that it could best make itself known. Therefore, those activities should become more action-oriented and relevant to the concerns of the United Nations system and its member States. At the same time, United Nations agencies should try to involve the University more in their activities. For example, whenever the United Nations decided to establish an expert body or task force to carry out an in-depth study, it should try to involve the University. That had not been done in the past. While the University's autonomy was sacrosanct, member States should consider ways of strengthening the interaction between the University and the other agencies of the United Nations system.

8. In order for the University to carry out its mandate, it must have adequate funds. Despite the pledges to the Endowment Fund and operating contributions by Member States, the University's financial situation remained serious. At the same time, the University should make every effort to keep administrative costs to an absolute minimum.

9. Mr. RUDENSKY (Russian Federation) said that, since the University's main task was to study global changes and global responsibility, its activities should deal with problems faced by all groups of countries. However, there was still a certain lack of balance in the University's programmes, in particular with regard to countries in transition.

10. The concept of security in the post-cold-war period was becoming more complex; in addition to political security, it also included economic, environmental, social and scientific and technological security. The United Nations University should therefore pay greater attention to the management of the interdisciplinary processes of security within the framework of global international relations.

11. Other topical research areas included the threat of aggressive nationalism, the economic aspect of environmental problems and the interaction of man-made and ecological systems. The University must study those problems in greater depth and publicize its findings.

12. Mr. FULCI (Italy) said that, in its more than 20 years of activity, the United Nations University had gained much experience in the conduct of studies and research to promote scientific progress, economic development and international peace and security. In 1993, Italy had contributed almost $2 million to fund a research project on microprocessors, which was part of the University's efforts in the area of information technologies.

13. As a contributor to Agenda 21, his delegation welcomed the University's commitment to the field of environmental protection. During the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development, the University's research on migration and urbanization and the environmental impact of population growth had provided a perfect example of synergy between the various institutions of the United Nations system.

14. The United Nations University should continue to coordinate its activities with other technical cooperation institutions of the United Nations system and with United Nations bodies active in the area of research and professional training.

15. Mr. CATARINO said that one of the many important programmes and projects in which the United Nations University was currently involved was the UNU International Institute for Software Technology, which had its headquarters in Macau. Since its establishment the Institute had undertaken a considerable number of very important projects in the field of software technology with a view to assisting developing countries, and awarded numerous research fellowships. It also organized short-term training workshops on computer software for selected individuals from many developing countries.

16. Mr. PHANIT (Thailand) said that his delegation was pleased that the activities of the United Nations University had been organized around the key issues of economic and social development and science and technology, which were of pressing importance to developing countries. The University's publications and research must be made available to the public.

17. His delegation commended the Council of the University for its adoption of a balanced budget for the biennium 1994-1995. As a developing country, Thailand would maintain its cooperation with and participation in the valuable work of the Council.

18. Ms. MATHURIN MAIR (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the University was in a unique and privileged position to contribute, through its world-wide network of scholars and its interdisciplinary and multicultural approaches, to a fuller understanding of the many complex forces that were transforming the world and challenging the United Nations system. The University had made substantive contributions to all the recent major world conferences and was also involved in preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development and Habitat II.

19. She was pleased to see that the University's major programmatic activities were being adapted to the priority concerns of the United Nations. The adoption of a long-term programme of research and capacity-building under Agenda 21 was an important step in that direction.

20. She noted also that the University had introduced its study on environmental law at the recent Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and that the University of the West Indies was conducting a regional teaching workshop on environmental economics for university teachers from the Caribbean and the Central American region as part of a series of workshops organized by the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER).

21. Programmatic consolidation focused on the broad agenda of the United Nations should be one of the guiding principles for the preparation of the University's next Medium-Term Perspective for 1995-2000. Particular attention would be devoted to the wider dissemination of the results of the University's research. The entire United Nations system would benefit from a fuller utilization of the University's potential in the fields of policy analysis and research and training, and the Secretary-General should take concrete and practical steps towards that end.

22. Noting that inflation and the weakening of the United States dollar had considerably eroded the value of the University's Endowment Fund, she said that remedial steps that the University had already taken must be bolstered by generous contributions from Member States in order to allow the University to function more effectively.

23. Mr. ABU ODEH (Jordan) said that the promotion of good governance as a pillar of democracy depended on the existence of a new and responsible generation of leaders who were aware of the universality of contemporary issues and hence the need for a universal approach to their solution. It was in that spirit that the Prime Minister of Jordan, Dr. Abdel Salam Majali, a member of the Council of the United Nations University, had come up with the idea of a programme for the promotion of leadership under the auspices of the University. He was pleased to announce that his Government had offered to house the headquarters of such a programme in Jordan. His country was particularly keen to support the programme because of its recent transition to multiparty democracy and its role in peace-building in the Middle East.

24. His delegation hoped that the Council of the United Nations University would approve the proposed centre for the training of young leaders at its forty-first session and that the University would secure the support of Member States for the project and remove the financial obstacles in its way.

25. Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland) said that an important functional concept of the United Nations University was its global network of research and training centres, the newest being the Centre for the Study of Governance in Barcelona and the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa in Ghana. The latter, the first such institute located in Africa, was especially important to broaden the

global reach of the University. As the host country to the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), Finland believed that Institute was in a good position to address the recent fundamental changes in the world economy. Careful coordination of the research and training centres was needed, however, to allow them the necessary autonomy to develop their own programmes while avoiding duplication of work.

26. His Government would encourage careful consideration of how the University, as a globally owned institution, could best serve the United Nations. In his view the University must have a solid network of cooperating and associated institutions, especially in the developing countries, in addition to more effective dissemination of the results of its work. A broad and predictable funding base would reflect its global ownership. The University's training activities must be reviewed and revitalized, while keeping in mind the need for cooperation with other relevant institutions. Postgraduate training should be made available primarily to talented students from developing countries and carried out as an integral part of research projects.

27. The time had come to consolidate the United Nations University as a global and decentralized research arm of the United Nations. To achieve that goal, clear policy guidance was needed from the Council of the University.

28. Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) said that the United Nations University could provide policy-makers and negotiators with useful tools for understanding a rapidly changing world. By disseminating its findings it could promote awareness of global problems and enhance the capacity to react to them. One research field deserving of special attention was economic and social development. With its extensive research capabilities, the University could contribute to efforts to address those problems. New directions in the world economy and advances in science and technology were two of the programme areas that seemed particularly appropriate. A clear perception of the interlinkages of trade, financial flows, science and technology, environment and population was essential in order to rise above the current excessive emphasis on technical cooperation and emergency assistance.

29. His delegation conveyed to the Government of Japan its appreciation for its continued strong support for the United Nations University.

30. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that the novel characteristics of some United Nations activities underlined the need for both long-term thinking and cross-fertilization between action in the field and its research and analytical capacity. In that context, the United Nations University stood at the intersection of several overlapping constituencies which it served concurrently: the academic world, Member States and the United Nations system.

31. The University's lack of visibility stemmed in large part from its nature as a network institution. The launching of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Japan should help the University to develop organic links with its international scientific constituency and with the Japanese scholarly community. Equally

important were the degree programmes established with other institutions of higher learning.

32. The Rector and the Council must be given every encouragement as they prepared the University's third Medium-Term Perspective for 1996-2001 to launch it into the twenty-first century.

33. Mr. LAKATOS (Hungary) said that the University was contributing to a better understanding of problems of paramount importance to the United Nations, and at the same time serving as a bridge to the international scientific community. The results of the University's research and its analytical capacity were of tremendous help to the United Nations and its Member States, as were the contributions it had made to recent United Nations conferences.

34. Mr. de SOUZA (Rector, United Nations University) said that he had taken good note of the many useful suggestions for areas where the University could focus its future work. However, in order to do more, it must be provided with more resources, human, financial and also material. He asked Member States for their assistance in increasing the dissemination of the University's work and in addressing the issues of prime importance to both Member States and the United Nations system.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.